

# An Order of Worship for the Home

August 2, 2020

Guest Pastor – Rev. Michael Lange, President of CA-NV-HI District LCMS

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*This service is written for two speakers. Ideally, family members can speak and declare God's grace to one another following this format. For those who live alone, this worship outline can be followed with a brother or sister in Christ over the phone. You may call on a friend to fill this role, or your elder or pastor can worship with you by phone.*

*There is an "offering prayer" included in this outline. As we shelter in place, please continue to worship through giving. You can mail offering envelopes and checks to Calvary or visit [www.calvaryslz.org](http://www.calvaryslz.org) to give online.*

## Invocation

Reader 1: We gather to worship. We gather to pray.  
Reader 2: We gather to our God and to his word.  
Reader 1: We gather in the name of our God who is...  
Reader 2: Father, Son and Holy Spirit...  
Together: Amen.

## Psalm 116:1-9

- <sup>1</sup> I love the Lord, because he has heard  
my voice and my pleas for mercy.  
<sup>2</sup> Because he inclined his ear to me,  
therefore I will call on him as long as I live.  
<sup>3</sup> The snares of death encompassed me;  
the pangs of Sheol laid hold on me;  
I suffered distress and anguish.  
<sup>4</sup> Then I called on the name of the Lord:  
"O Lord, I pray, deliver my soul!"  
  
<sup>5</sup> Gracious is the Lord, and righteous;  
our God is merciful.  
<sup>6</sup> The Lord preserves the simple;  
when I was brought low, he saved me.  
<sup>7</sup> Return, O my soul, to your rest;  
for the Lord has dealt bountifully with you.  
  
<sup>8</sup> For you have delivered my soul from death,  
my eyes from tears,  
my feet from stumbling;

<sup>9</sup> I will walk before the Lord  
in the land of the living.

### Confession & Absolution

*Make sure each person present has opportunity to confess to a brother or sister in faith. Go through both parts as many times as needed to accommodate all who are gathered. (From the order of Compline, Lutheran Service Book p.254)*

Christian Confessing: I confess to God Almighty, before the whole company of heaven and to you, my brothers and sisters, that I have sinned in thought, word, and deed by my fault, by my own fault, by my own most grievous fault; wherefore I pray God Almighty to have mercy on me, forgive me all my sins, and bring me to everlasting life. Amen.

Christian Responding: The almighty and merciful Lord grant you pardon, forgiveness, and remission of all your sins.

Together: Amen

### John 15:1-11

I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. <sup>2</sup> Every branch in me that does not bear fruit he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit. <sup>3</sup> Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you. <sup>4</sup> Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. <sup>5</sup> I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. <sup>6</sup> If anyone does not abide in me he is thrown away like a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. <sup>7</sup> If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. <sup>8</sup> By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples. <sup>9</sup> As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love. <sup>10</sup> If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. <sup>11</sup> These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.

### Apostles' Creed

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth.

And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried. He descended into hell. The third day He rose again from the

dead. He ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty. From thence He will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Christian Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

### Jeremiah 18:1-8

The word that came to Jeremiah from the Lord: <sup>2</sup>“Arise, and go down to the potter's house, and there I will let you hear my words.” <sup>3</sup> So I went down to the potter's house, and there he was working at his wheel. <sup>4</sup> And the vessel he was making of clay was spoiled in the potter's hand, and he reworked it into another vessel, as it seemed good to the potter to do.

<sup>5</sup> Then the word of the Lord came to me: <sup>6</sup>“O house of Israel, can I not do with you as this potter has done? declares the Lord. Behold, like the clay in the potter's hand, so are you in my hand, O house of Israel. <sup>7</sup> If at any time I declare concerning a nation or a kingdom, that I will pluck up and break down and destroy it, <sup>8</sup> and if that nation, concerning which I have spoken, turns from its evil, I will relent of the disaster that I intended to do to it.

### Message

#### **Listen, Listen Carefully, Listen Again**

Have you ever been through a rather challenging time, a crisis, a disaster, a jarring death or a loss, maybe even an extreme life altering reality? While our present challenges may not yet qualify for any of these specific definitions in this spring and summer of 2020, we are certainly treading upon sand that has been freshly raked, and we are making some new tracks wherever we walk. Maybe you have experienced the terrors of death close by or another profound loss. Was it financial? Perhaps even worse. Maybe the loss of a relationship, or the destroying of a family has been the lot that you have suffered? Pressures like these bend us. They break us. They threaten, they mar, they blemish our person almost permanently. The writer of our text today, Jeremiah, knew even greater oppression than this. He experienced emotional and community pain, personal fear and threats on his life, yes, more than once.

His calling was to speak God's word; calling people to repent who were in constant denial and rebellion. He was called to go where God would send and to speak that which God commanded him. Often, he was given to speak the most challenging and unpopular of truths. Shortly before the well-known words of today's text, Jeremiah had spoken a virtual gullywasher of curses and calls to

repent. He had performed acts that were signs to the community and endured threats on his life.

*“Do not be afraid of them for I am with you to deliver you, declares the Lord.” (Jeremiah 1:8)*

This was the promise of the God who had called him, the God who calls to you. Jeremiah was beat down by that which he was constrained to share, and the reaction of those to whom he shared the message. Emotionally and spiritually I suppose you could say he was kind of dragging tail.

*Listen!* God had something to show Jeremiah here personally. He has something to show you and me.

*Listen Carefully!* The message is bigger than Jeremiah and it is bigger than any one of us.

*Listen again!* There is a God behind this message, who willingly bathes in the dust, the dirt of his own people’s making.

Who is this Jeremiah? Well – he is born into the family of a priest, called and sent by God to be a prophet to his people, showing up just a short walk north of Jerusalem. The initial work came when he was still a youth, barely having entered manhood.

Times seemed relatively good. Josiah, a good king, was on the throne. The temple and worship there had been revived, and there remained a faded, but ingrained sense of national pride.

However, apathy and shallowness of worship life contributed to the false security bolstered by a hollow ritual of temple worship. The nation was stumbling without commitment and depth of faith in their Lord, Yahweh.

So here, the word of the Lord comes to Jeremiah,

*“Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you, and before you were born, I consecrated you. I appointed you to be a prophet to the nations.” (Jeremiah 1:5)*

*Listen!* Being formed by the Former of all things is no small blessing. Later, in that same episode of the word coming to Jeremiah, his mouth is touched and it is said, “Behold, I have put my words in your mouth.” (Jeremiah 1:9) Not unlike Isaiah, the mouth is made holy because the word of God that will spring from

those lips will be the design and content of Yahweh himself. Jeremiah will have no choice, but to speak this word over nations and kingdoms.

These words will pluck up, break down, destroy, overthrow, build, and plant. It goes without saying that with such a mandate, Jeremiah will not be popular.

God's message is overwhelming. The prophecies each pound like a hammer blow on Jeremiah and on the people. The people who hear the message, sadly, were bemused, sometimes rebellious, and always unyielding.

This is the personal disease and muck of experience that clings to Jeremiah when he is summoned to watch the potter in Jeremiah 18. Don't make any mistakes. This is not a parable in the Old Testament, and not only the words to a hymn, but it's an experience given by God Himself for Jeremiah to observe, and to examine, and to visually *listen* as a sign from God continues and then to *listen* even more *carefully*.

"Arise", comes the word of God. What do you think? Was Jeremiah weary? Wouldn't you be?

*"...go down to the potter's house, and there I will let you hear my words." (Jeremiah 18:2)*

Observe with Jeremiah as you walk into the potter's house. Surrounded by space for display of the useful and beautifully intricate works of art, that the potter, this creator, this artist has made. Shaped by this potter under shade from the heat from the sun. Close at hand is a source of water, to aid the potter in the work of forming and shaping the clay as it pleases him. Not to be missed, is the scrap heap of discarded refuse, a witness to the imperfection of the medium that the potter uses. And seated in the center of it all, is the practical artist at the wheel of his creation.

*"And there he was working at this wheel. And the vessel he was making was marred in his hand and he re-worked it as seemed good for the potter to do." (Jeremiah 18:3)*

What did Jeremiah see? Lumps of clay, moistened dust, the hands of an artistic former of it all? The evidence of his ability in the backdrop, and the potential for disaster lying in the discard pile?

Jeremiah saw a practical creator who could take the medium of dust and water and even when it was blemished, marred and failed, he did not throw it on the heap of refuse. He kneaded it, worked it, moistened, and reshaped it into yet another creation as seemed best to him.

Have you *listened*? Now *listen carefully*. Then the word of the Lord comes “Oh house of Israel...” (Jeremiah 18:6) Is this message primarily about Jeremiah? No. It sounds like God has a much bigger picture in mind than just Jeremiah, or me, or you. He’s looking at the whole house of Israel at that time, but he’s also thinking about the whole house of Israel which includes you and I, all true believers for eternity.

This sermon is being shared with your whole Calvary family, and even Lutheran churches throughout northern California, Nevada and Hawaii. So, is this word from the Lord only about Jeremiah and you? Stop and picture your brothers and sisters in faith. I’m going to wait for you. No—I really mean it, imagine them.

Have you done it? This is not about you and me alone. It’s about the set apart – the called out – the holy and elect people of God. That’s all of the people you’ve just recalled. Just look at all the beautifully reshaped, reworked, and intricate pieces formed and re-formed by the Master Artist that are known to you!

The word of the Lord, while meant to be seen by Jeremiah and you, is truly about the beloved and the “called” community of His saints.

*“Can I not do with you as the potter has done?...like the clay in the potter’s hand...” (Jeremiah 18:6)*

That is God’s holy desire for his faltering, marred, and blemished community of Israel.

He would desire to re-form and reshape them as seems BEST to Him. In the words that follow, you and I see the heart of God for the nation of Israel and for His holy church. We also see that God has an eye for all the nations because His word is not limited just for Israel, just for the church. Our God never lets His gaze waiver from all the people, all the people He has formed. God lives and moves not only in the church, but in the whole world.

We see clearly in these verses that even if God would pluck up, breakdown, and destroy the nation to which He has spoken... If they respond to His word, He would turn and relent from that which He had planned.

God is full of mercy. He desires to show mercy. That is what He has done for us, once for all on the cross. His mercy continues to flow from that “once for all” action.

The same holy God who called Jeremiah before Jeremiah was formed in the womb, is also the Artistic Former who in his good and holy will would desire not to discard His people, but to call them back by His Word.

With the kneading of the Spirit and the water of life flowing freely from His own source, He would re-form His people as it pleases Him. He would re-form you and me individually, and as the community of God together. Have you *listened*? Have you *listened carefully*? Please *listen again*, just one more time.

The one who formed Jeremiah in chapter 1, the Creative Former who would re-form the marred vessels as seems good to Him, is the one who lovingly formed mankind from the dust and breathed life into him (Genesis 2).

Our God performs even more. We already know the imagery of His hands sunk in the muck and dirt to create us. However, these incarnate hands, these creative hands, also sweat drops like blood as He wrestled in prayer with His Father over how He would re-form all of us.

He performs by saving us from the eternal return to the dust of death. Taking upon Himself the grime and smear of all our failures – the mar and blemish that would land us on the heap of refuse – He dispatches them by His determined crucifixion.

Ultimately, His resurrection performance casts us in a new and glorified form made unto His likeness as pleases Him.

Let me share a brief true story about a young man caught up in the pride and rebellion of early adulthood, tearfully, yet confidently, coming to his father. Knowingly, but with deep repentance, he actually said these words to his Dad. “Dad, I have sinned against you. I sinned against God. I don’t deserve to be your son.” And then with a knowing, and a bit mischievous, gleam in his eyes he says, “...but I know you Dad. I know you have already forgiven me. The problem is – I just don’t know whether I can forgive myself.”

The father considered his distraught son. The words he shared had been passed down to him by his own re-formed father. “My son, I think you are missing something. The God who made you hasn’t asked you whether you deserve to be forgiven. He lifts your head. He wipes your grime onto Himself and He makes you into something beautiful, working to remake all of the things you think you have to fix on your own. He hasn’t asked you what you think, son. He is the potter. You and I? We’re just clay.”

Did you *listen*?

Did you *listen carefully*?  
Did you *listen again*?

You were lovingly shaped for a purpose. His holy will is that His beloved people would be called back by His word.

Our God forms, He re-forms and He performs. Smearred with the muck of our making and our re-making, He grants us a new and glorified form.

God's peace be to you.

*Listen. Listen Again. Listen carefully* to the forceful words of your Re-former.  
Amen.

### Offering Prayer

*If you have an offering present as you worship, you may place your hands over it during the offering prayer.*

Reader 1: With thankful hearts we receive from you, O Lord.  
Reader 2: With thankful hearts we respond.  
Reader 1: Receive our thanks and praise.  
Reader 2: Receive our offerings.  
Together: Receive us as your own.

### Prayers and the Lord's Prayer

*Share prayer requests with one another. Pray over the requests shared, then pray the Lord's Prayer together.*

Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name,  
thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread;  
and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us;  
and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.  
For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen.

### Blessing (Numbers 6:24-26)

Reader 1: The Lord bless you and keep you.  
Reader 2: The Lord make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you.  
Reader 1: The Lord look upon you with favor...  
Reader 2: And give you peace.  
Together: Amen.

*As applicable, please share this resource with others who would benefit. An electronic version is available at [www.calvaryslz.org](http://www.calvaryslz.org). We can also add friends to our mailing list if that is preferred.*

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